

the military, politics and civil rights, African-Americans have been key to the progress and prosperity of our Nation. Blacks have contributed to the artistic and literary heritage of America from the early years to the present. They have influenced the field of music as composers, vocalists, and instrumentalists and played a seminal role in the emergence of blues, jazz, gospel, and rhythm and blues.

Although African-Americans owned and published newspapers in the 19th century, their achievements in the communications industry have been most noted in the 20th century, when they produced and contributed to magazines, newspapers, and television and radio news and talk shows in unprecedented numbers. There are now hundreds of Black-owned radio stations throughout the country. While integrated into professional sports relatively recently, African-American athletes have reached the highest levels of accomplishment. They also comprise some of the finest athletes representing the United States in the Olympic Games.

As we move into the new Millennium, we look forward to the continued growth and prosperity of African-American citizens. Our Nation's history is replete with the contributions of African-Americans. Black History Month affords all Americans an opportunity to celebrate the great achievements of African-Americans, to celebrate how far this Nation has come, and to remind us of how far we have to go.

DR. BENJAMIN ELIJAH MAYS

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I rise today to bring the country's attention to one of its most gifted educators, civil rights leaders and theologians, the late Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, and to again encourage the President to award Dr. Mays a Presidential Medal of Freedom. Dr. Mays lived an extraordinary life that began in a very unextraordinary setting. The son of slaves, Dr. Mays grew up in the rural community of Epworth, South Carolina where poverty and racism were everyday realities and the church was sometimes the only solace to be found. Yet, as the title of Dr. Mays' autobiography, "Born to Rebel" reveals, he was never satisfied with the status quo and looked to education as the key to his own success, and later the key to sweeping social change.

After working his way through South Carolina College, Bates College and a doctoral program at the University of Chicago, Dr. Mays worked as a teacher, an urban league representative and later dean of the School of Religion at Howard University here in Washington. Then, in 1940, he took the reins at Morehouse College and—to borrow a phrase—the rest was history. As President of Morehouse, Dr. Mays took an ailing institution and transformed it into one of America's most vital aca-

demic centers and an epicenter for the growing civil rights movement. He was instrumental in the elimination of segregated public facilities in Atlanta and promoted the cause of nonviolence through peaceful student protests in a time often marred by racial violence. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other influential 20th century leaders considered Dr. Mays a mentor and scores of colleges and universities—from Harvard University to Lander University in South Carolina—have acknowledged his impressive achievements by awarding him an honorary degree.

After retiring from Morehouse after 27 years, Dr. Mays did not fade from the spotlight—far from it. He served as president of the Atlanta Board of Education for 12 years, ensuring that new generations of children received the same quality education he had fought so hard to obtain back in turn-of-the-century South Carolina. Dr. Mays said it best in his autobiography: "Foremost in my life has been my honest endeavors to find the truth and proclaim it." Now is the time for us to proclaim Dr. Benjamin Mays one of our nation's most distinguished citizens by awarding him a posthumous Presidential Medal of Freedom.

ASYLUM AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, before leaving office, Attorney General Reno ordered the Board of Immigration Appeals to reconsider its decision to reject the asylum claim of a Guatemalan domestic violence victim. I applaud the former Attorney General for her actions in this case, entitled Matter of R.A., and I encourage the Bush Administration to continue with her efforts to provide a safe harbor for victims of severe domestic abuse.

The facts of the R.A. case are chilling. Ms. Rodi Alvarado Pena sought asylum after suffering from unthinkable abuse at the hands of her husband in her native Guatemala, abuse that ended only when she escaped to the United States in 1995. She said that her husband raped and pistol-whipped her, and beat her unconscious in front of her children. She said that law enforcement authorities in Guatemala told her that they would not protect her from violent crimes committed against her by her husband. And she believed that her husband would kill her if she returned to Guatemala.

The INS did not dispute what Ms. Pena said, and in 1996, an immigration judge determined that she was entitled to asylum. But in 1999, the Board of Immigration Appeals ("BIA") reversed that decision on the grounds that even if everything Ms. Pena said were true, she did not qualify for asylum because victims of domestic abuse do not constitute a "social group" under existing law. This decision seemed to me and a number of other Senators and Representatives to be inconsistent with

previous decisions extending asylum to victims of sexual abuse. I wrote Doris Meissner, then the Commissioner of the INS, in August 1999 to express my concerns about the case. I joined a group of Senators writing Attorney General Reno about this matter in November 1999, and raised those concerns again in letters to the Attorney General in February and September 2000. Finally, I reiterated my concerns to Ms. Meissner in August 2000.

The Justice Department released a proposed rule in December that would make it easier for women to base asylum petitions on gender-based persecution. Then-Attorney General Reno's January 19 order stays the R.A. case until a final version of that rule is approved, at which time the BIA will reconsider the case in light of that rule. I urge the Bush Administration to approve a final rule that provides strong protections for victims of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based oppression. And I urge the BIA to apply that rule in a way that provides the maximum protection for such women.

The United States should have—and I believe does have—a bipartisan commitment to refugees. I have been joined by Republicans such as Senators BROWBACK and JEFFORDS in my attempts to draw attention to this case. And I am optimistic that the Bush Administration will share our concerns. No one wants to see a victim of domestic violence returned to face further abuse, especially where her government does not have the will or ability to protect her. Working together, and building on the foundation laid by Attorney General Reno, we can prevent that from happening.

TRIBUTE TO FORMER SENATOR ALAN CRANSTON

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I join many of my colleagues in paying tribute to former Senator Alan Cranston, who died on New Year's Eve, 2000. Since I came to the Senate in 1985, I have had the honor of serving on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and my first 8 years on the committee were under the superb chairmanship of Senator Cranston. During our years, I came to know and appreciate his unbounded dedication to the veterans of this country, and his extraordinary record of leadership and commitment to our Nation throughout his 24 years of public service in the U.S. Senate.

Senator Cranston played an integral role in veterans affairs from his first days in the Senate, serving initially as Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee of the then-Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. When that subcommittee became the full Committee on Veterans' Affairs in 1971, he was a charter member of it. He became Chairman of the full Committee in 1977, was ranking member from 1978–1986, and then Chairman again in 1987, until he left the Senate in 1993.